

Santa Barbara City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness and Community Relations
December 18, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Santa Barbara City Council Chambers
735 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Minutes

Council Members Present: Iya Falcone, Dale Francisco, Helene Schneider

Staff Present: Frank Mannix, Sue Gray, Steve Wiley, Don Olson

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 13, 2008

The minutes were approved as submitted (M-Schneider/S-Francisco).

2. RECAP OF LAST MEETING

Staff gave a brief recap of the November 13th subcommittee meeting and explained changes made to the Rough Draft Discussion of Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to Homelessness.

3. PUBLIC INPUT AND SUBCOMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Public input was taken for each recommendation after Steve Wiley, City Attorney, clarified that recommendation #1 (revised solicitation ordinance) would not apply to the simple act of holding up a sign to solicit donations, as it is not illegal to solicit in this way and persons doing so would be protected by the Courts. In response to a question from Councilmember Schneider regarding recommendation #10, Sue Gray clarified that the City received \$1,140,794 in 2006 for a coastal zone affordable overnight accommodation fund. Since that time, this fund has earned \$123,562 in interest income and it is estimated that it could earn approximately \$50,000 per year, which could be used for emergency hotel vouchers for vulnerable populations. Steve Wiley explained the history of these funds.

Public Input was taken on the recommendations:

- John Buttny, Bringing Our Community Home, asked that bullet #2 (illegal to solicit in a vehicle on a public street or alleyway) be revised because the way it is written implies that a person would be prohibited from soliciting from a vehicle.
- Bill Collyer, Downtown Organization, read a position paper prepared by the Downtown Organization, Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce, SBV&CB and the GSBR&LA (see attachment #1).

- Peter Marin, Committee for Social Justice, thanked the City for making the distinction regarding the definition of panhandling and asked that the language be changed on recommendation #1 to reflect this. He also asked whether disabled persons will be allowed to sit on benches while soliciting.
- Nancy McCradie, South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee (SCHAC), stated that members of the SCHAC were also concerned with the panhandling issue and was glad that the definition was clarified.
- Steve Cushman, Chamber of Commerce, stated that he and others have been around for 20 years and the same issue concerning homelessness has come up again. He said that at that time the City had two foot patrol officers walk up and down State Street and the Downtown Organization started a Host Program and the problem of panhandling lessened. He stated that he felt the document contained a good set of recommendations that represent business interests and the Chamber is willing to do its part. He stated that the problem today is not as bad as it has been in the past and that Santa Barbara has one of the best shopping streets in the world. He stated that everyone involved in this process is compassionate and wants to help and he feels the subcommittee is going in the right direction.
- Ruth Wilson, Holy Chao and Pershing Park Feeding Program, stated that it was good that the subcommittee is clarifying definitions and made a general comment that we need love to replace fear.
- Jeanette Weber, S.B. Hotelier, asked that the area of the ordinance be expanded on Cabrillo Blvd down to Pershing Park. She stated that homeless persons come into hotels and eat the breakfasts meant for their paying guests. She feels that the City needs an indoor place for homeless persons to eat and Sunday's are not a good time to feed people in Pershing Park as that is a busy day for visitors to walk around the area. She also feels that the community needs a State run institutional program for persons with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues.
- Kathy Janega-Dykes, S.B. Conference and Visitor's Bureau, stated that the goal of this process should be to develop recommendations that help those in need while protecting the needs of the community. She said that aggressive panhandling is a lose/lose situation for both homeless persons and merchants. She supports the recommendations and feels they are well rounded and designed to protect the economy of Santa Barbara.
- David Damiano, Downtown Organization/Conference & Visitors Bureau, supported the comments of both Bill Collyer and Kathy Janega-Dykes. He said he feels that State Street needs a greater police presence. He reported that he has seen negative information regarding State Street on travel blogs.
- Tamara Erickson, Hotel Santa Barbara/Downtown Organization, stated that many merchants and hotel owners are creatively changing their priorities in

light of the economic times we are facing; however, they can't change their environment. She feels that the City needs to help make the businesses that provide TOTT viable. She said that conditions are worse now, they continue to get worse and she doesn't ever see police on State Street.

- Eric Walter, Holy Chaos, Pershing Park, stated that Holy Chaos does not provide meals on Sunday mornings. He made a general comment that many of the recommendations focus on passing laws to curb negative behavior and this could result in selective enforcement. He stated that we need to solve the problems that result in this behavior.
- Frank Goss said that he is cognizant of a population that is not at this meeting and he said there are many issues with homelessness around businesses. He said that he walked State Street from Sola to Ortega and counted 19 vacant storefronts. He said the City needs to protect the downtown and should consider opening Casa Esperanza 24 hours/day, 12 months per year because they have services in one location.
- Roger Heroux, Brining Our Community Home, stated that studies show that multidisciplinary teams are effective in getting people off the streets. He said the 10-Year Plan supports recommendation #5 regarding outreach; however, the recommendation should state that the outreach should be under one umbrella. A collaboration of the current outreach teams would come close to a multidisciplinary team. One of the goals of the 10-Year Plan is coordinated outreach on the streets, in hospitals and jails and Bringing Our Community Home would be willing to serve as the coordinating umbrella. Specific recommendations include: make homeless outreach a priority for CDBG/Human Services grants; make participation in homeless outreach coordination a condition of City funding; sent letter to County Housing and Community Development Director urging them to make homeless outreach a priority for their funding in partnership with the City; and have BOCH be the lead agency to coordinate the homeless outreach collaboration.
- Steve Hyslop, Greater S.B. Lodging and Restaurant Assoc/Harbor Merchant's Association/Conference and Visitor's Bureau/Chamber of Commerce, stated that this is a complicated issue and he wholeheartedly supports the recommendations. He agreed that the panhandling ordinance (#1) should be expanded to include Pershing Park. He read two emails he received from citizens and stated that the conduct of aggressive panhandlers is the issue; not the condition of homelessness. He would like to see more foot patrols on the street. He also stated that the business/hospitality industry is actively engaged in fundraising for homeless services as well as other not-for-profit causes.
- Mike Jordan commented that there were no residents in the room. He said that the City should separate the issues and call out those who exhibit inappropriate behavior. He agreed that an alternative giving program needs to be on the street; not posters in the windows of businesses on State Street. He also said that there needs to be a greater role for Casa Esperanza and a long

term strategy for another facility. He stated that the City needs to step up and take the first step to get others on board (i.e. County, State, Feds).

- Kay Warner, Holiday Express, stated that she recently had a positive interaction with the Police Department regarding disruptive behavior in her hotel. The police officer found the person and asked him why he was disruptive and told him to stop. She hasn't seen him since.
- Roslyn Sherman, New Beginnings/WillBridge, talked about recent media coverage and the plight of aging homeless living in vehicles. She stated that the community needs to get to the root of the problem: why people are on the streets. She also said that the perception of the homeless as plights of neighborhood needs to be changed. She said that Santa Barbara is on the cutting edge and talked about an article written by Gary Linker who spoke at a conference in Berkeley regarding the R.V. Safe Parking Program and Restorative Policing. She said that the donation boxes in Ventura businesses have not been successful. She said that the City should let people who need to panhandle do it, but she is okay with the aggressive panhandling ordinance.
- Mike Foley, Casa Esperanza, stated that the City needs both enforcement and services in order for it to work. He asked that the "should" in recommendation #1 (enforcement of this ordinance should be done in coordination with a panhandling education campaign and compassion not cash alternative giving campaign) be changed to "must". He also asked that the money raised in an alternate giving campaign be given solely to street outreach.
- Bob Hansen stated that society is waging a war against the homeless and we are going to blow each other up; it's destiny. He said that we need a national agenda to deal with issues and that society is ducking solutions and putting band aids on the problem.
- A community member stated that he met three homeless persons and attempted to hook them up with services, however he met with resistance. He supports recommendation #5 regarding street outreach; however he is concerned with the strategy of referring people to services. He feels that there needs to be a connection made before referrals to homeless services are made.
- Peter Marin, Committee for Social Justice, expressed a concern about private funding of police officer (recommendation #3). He said that it raises a series of questions regarding the objectivity of the officers. He also stated that State Street is a public street, not a mall and it is open to all unless they specifically break the law. He felt that the City should confer with the County regarding the impacts on the Public Defender's Office before implementing recommendation #2 (prosecuting municipal code violations as misdemeanors instead of infractions for chronic offenders and in certain areas of the City).
- Mike Foley, Casa Esperanza, urged the subcommittee to not do recommendation #3 (redeployment of officers) because it would cause a

significant conflict in the community. He feels more work needs to be done in this area and a broader solution needs to be considered. He also feels that a separate task force needs to work on implementing the strategies in recommendation #4 (recovery zone). He said that if the enforcement strategies are done there will be people who fall apart and they will need a place to go and recover. He would like recommendation #6 (Casa Esperanza year-round bed expansion) to begin with, "The subcommittee recommends an increased bed capacity in the City". He said that Casa Esperanza is not planning to come forward with a request to expand their year-round beds by 100; they plan to request an additional 40 to be used exclusively for disabled persons, women and the most vulnerable homeless (140 total year-round beds).

- Nancy McCradie stated that the City needs more restorative policing.
- John Dixon, Tri-County Produce, was concerned about recommendation #4 (recovery zone) because it deals only with convicted drug dealers. He wondered about chronic inebriates. He said that he would like to participate in permits limiting alcohol sales. He feels that part of the solution is good old fashioned policing on State Street and Milpas Street. He is not supportive of recommendation #6 (Casa Esperanza year-round bed expansion) because the area is already impacted.
- John Buttny, Bringing our Community Home, expressed concern about recommendation #2 (misdemeanors prosecution) because everyone should have equal protection under the law and prosecuting individuals in certain areas and chronic offenders is contrary to this. He is pleased with recommendation #5 (street outreach coordination); however he urged the subcommittee to cost out the number of outreach workers that can be hired versus police officers. He asked to take out the strategy regarding the outreach meeting at Cottage Hospital as that meeting has a very specific purpose. He also thought the having street outreach workers contact homeless persons prior to enforcement actions are a bad idea.
- Steve Hyslop, Greater S.B. Lodging and Restaurant Assoc/Harbor Merchant's Association/Conference and Visitor's Bureau/Chamber of Commerce, felt there needs to be further research on recommendation #11 (alternate giving campaign) to find out who has participated and if it was successful, why; and if it was not successful, why not. He stated that the business community will participate in the data gathering and asked the subcommittee to contact him or Kathy Janega-Dykes.
- Mitchell Sjerven, Conference and Visitor's Bureau, feels that it would be beneficial for people to know where the money will go from an alternate giving campaign (recommendation #11). He also stressed that the purpose of recommendation #1 (panhandling ordinance) should be to address a specific behavior, not end homelessness.

- Randy, Downtown Organization, asked for enhanced police presence because the perception of security on State Street is important.
- Daniel Knapp spoke about homelessness in general.
- Roslyn Sherman, New Beginnings/WillBridge, feels that recommendation #3 (police redeployment) needs to include more restorative policing; recommendation #4 (recovery zone) needs to include something about existing stores selling liquor; money from recommendation #10 (affordable overnight accommodation fund) and recommendation #11 (alternative giving campaign) should go for funding counseling services.

Subcommittee members concluded the meeting with general comments:

Councilmember Francisco gave a little background on the closing of the State Hospital system and said that it was well intentioned and was intended to address abuses; however it didn't quite work. He said that having homeless mentally ill persons living on the streets is also abuse. He stated that this subcommittee was not set up to deal with the bigger issue of homelessness, but to deal with specific issues. This focus may appear narrow but they are trying to focus on what can be done now.

Councilmember Schneider said that she felt a sense of everyone working together and this is the tone we want with the recommendations. She would like to look at the conduct of people not their condition; she feels all the recommendations should go together; she stated that they have received specific wording issues to work on from this meeting; she feels the subcommittee is on the right track to putting together a package of recommendations and they can be polished at the January meeting.

Chair Falcone asked for more clarification on the sitting issue in recommendation #1 (panhandling ordinance). She stated that she asked for this subcommittee so there would be a specific vehicle to get the community together to address this complex issue. She recognizes that there isn't a one brush approach and she feels that this has been an uplifting, complete process and everyone has been heard. She stated that there is no right or wrong and everyone is doing the best they can. She asked that people get staff written comments before the January meeting and she said that public comment will be tight at that meeting.

4. DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 29, 2009 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

5. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

ATTENDEES

Justin Weaver, S.B. Resident
John Buttny, Bringing Our Community Home
Peter Marin, Committee for Social Justice
Lynn Karlson, YMCA Youth and Family
Frank Goss, Business Owner and Resident
Steve Cushman, Chamber of Commerce
Bill Collyer, S.B. Downtown Organization
Tamara Erickson, Hotel Santa Barbara/Downtown Organization
Kathy Janega-Dykes, S.B. Conference and Visitor's Bureau
Pamela Webber, B/W Pepper Tree
Tom Thomas, Santa Barbara Bank & Trust
Mike Sederholm, County Housing & Community Development
Harry Kazali, Quality Inn/Days Inn
Tom Patton, Ramada Limited
David Damiano, Downtown Organization/Conference & Visitors Bureau
Nancy McCradie, South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee
Steve Hyslop, Greater S.B. Lodging and Restaurant Assoc/Harbor Merchant's Assoc.
Jack & Ruth Wilson, Holy Chaos, Pershing Park
Bill Duval, Downtown Organization
Jan Ingram, Cottage Hospital Parish Nursing
Dan Knapp, Client
Mark Watson, Noah's Anchorage
Emily Roessler, Noah's Anchorage
Lori Crestfield, S.B. County Probation
Randy Rowse, S.B. Downtown Organization
Imelda Loza, Casa Esperanza
Roger Heroux, Bringing Our Community Home
Mike Foley, Casa Esperanza
John Dixon, Tri-County Produce
Roslyn Scheuerman, New Beginnings & WillBridge
Jeanette Weber, S.B. Hotelier
Eric Walter, Holy Chaos, Pershing Park
Frank Goss
Mike Jordan
Kay Warner, Holiday Express
Bob Hansen
Mitchell Sjerven, Conference and Visitor's Bureau
Randy, Downtown Organization